DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 697 CS 004 764

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TITLE Staffing Patterns and In-Service Needs of a "Boy-Oriented" Program.
PUB DATE May 78
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (23rd, Houston, Texas, May 1-5, 1978); For related documents, see CS 004 735, CS 004 761, and CS 004 746

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Males; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Fairness; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Recruitment; *Teacher Workshops

ABSTRACT

This paper is one in a series of four describing a boy-oriented program for elementary school children. It focuses on current staffing patterns and suggests that a balance of male and female role models in the schools is desirable and can be achieved by recruiting more male elementary teachers and by recruiting male teacher aides, paid and unpaid. In addition, it indicates that a teaching staff can learn through inservice training and preservice workshops to meet the affective and academic needs of both males and females and suggests possible workshop topics. (TJ)

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ED170697

Staffing Patterns and In-Service Needs of a "Boy-Oriented" Program

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Staffing Patterns And In-Service Needs Of A "Boy-Oriented" Program

Do boys academically fail more than girls in school? The reality is that, in school, boys do academically fail more often than girls and do not have an even break with girls (Bentzen, 1965; Schaeffer, 1969; Peltier, 1968). This conclusion was substantiated by an investigation in Thermalito Union Elementary School District (Barnes and Gehringer, 1977, 1978a, 1978b; Gehringer and Barnes, 1978) in an analysis of standardized tests, psychological referrals, cumulative file comments, unexcused absence data, the population of remedial reading pupils, identified "discipline problems," and the population of Educationally Handicapped pupils. The investigation indicated that boys were more likely (than girls) to: (1) have reading problems; (2) be referred and/or tested by the school psychologist; (3) score in Q_1 on reading, math and language tests; (4) become "discipline problems"; (5) be enrolled in an Educationally Handicapped class or a remedial reading class; and (6) have "negative" remarks written about them on the school cumulative file records. Analysis of local district data revealed that boys failed more often than girls, at a two-to-one ratio.

In an effort to effect a change in the low performance of boys and to close the gap in boy-and-girl achievement levels, an E.S.E.A. Title III Project (later retermed IV-C)

was written and funded. The Project, "Equality Education for Everyone," was later nicknamed as "Project Boy." The three year project was initiated and the staff developed a "boy-oriented" curriculum, with extra-curricular and playground activities. The three year project resulted in the publication of the Project Boy Syllabus Activity Card Program.

The planning, implementation and evaluation of such a "boy-oriented" program involves many different activities and considerations, one of which is staffing patterns. Another consideration is in-service. The purposes of this paper are as follows: (1) to historically review staffing patterns; and (2) to informally share some of the impressions and experiences of the Project Boy Program's three year study regarding staffing patterns; and (3) to suggest in-service program topics. *

STAFFING PATTERNS:

At present, women dominate elementary education (grades K-6). This "feminine dominance" is somewhat ironic when considered in historic perspective. In the sixteenth century, women were thought, by society, to be noneducable in a setting where all teachers and pupils were male. At one time in American history, men were sought after as the most skilled teachers of young children, whereas in another later period,

*The Project Boy Program Abstract and Evaluation are reported elsewhere (Barnes and Gehringer, 1977, 1978a, 1978b; Gehringer and Barnes, 1978). Statistically significant gains (to the .05 level of significance) were made by boys. The overall objectives of the project were met: Boys achieved at the high level of girls in Reading, Math and Language.

they were excluded in favor of women teachers. From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the "Dame School," and "School Marm," and "Modern Teacher," the pendulum opinion has swang back and forth.

The first schools in the colonies, conducted by the ladies, were the "Dame Schools," which operated on a private and charitable basis (Eby, 1952). The first public or "Common" schools in the United States were legislated into existence in the middle of the seventeenth century. The "School Master" of the town was the main force in teaching through the eighteenth century. The school master had great prestige but low pay (Brubacher, 1974).

In the nineteenth century, the school master was replaced by the "School Marm" (Butts, 1955). There were several reasons for the change but the most basic reason was also the most important: Women teachers would work for less money. Other arguments were that women could manage younger children better and had stronger moral characters than men. Both Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, noted educational leaders of the day, announced that women were better qualified to teach the young (Brubacher, 1974).

As a result, women began to dominate the lower grades (kindergarten through third) and men taught at the higher grade levels. By making this change, men gained definite benefits -- more prestige and higher pay. This attitude

continued into the twentieth century (May, 1971).

Some men taught in the upper elementary grades but chose not to teach primary (kindergarten through third grades). In some school districts, there were restrictions forbidding men to teach below the fourth grade. The moral issue was the basis for this ruling. There were social misgivings about the wisdom of allowing little girls to interact or be exposed to the male personality unless that personality belonged to their father (Brubacher, 1974).

Recently, the pendulum has moved again to view men teachers of young children as valuable. Many factors are involved in this attitude change, such as, our rapidly changing society, the unstable family unit, the large number of children from divorced, fatherless homes where no male models are present and the reality that boys academically fail more often than girls. It has been concluded that men can make contribution in our changing society, especially in primary grades (St. John, 1932; Lavin, 1965).

Women made up 85 percent of the teaching staff at the elementary school level (K-6) in 1966 according to the National Education Association, while in 1972, the number of male K-3 teachers represented only 2 percent of the teaching staff.

To attribute all society's ills to the predominance of female teachers in the elementary school would be obviously hazardous. It is obvious that students, boys and girls,

profit from having both female and male teachers. A balance of "role models" within the school is recommended.

The problem is not one of having more women elementary teachers but that "masculine virtues" are sometimes diametrically opposed to those viewed as "desirable" in the "typical," "traditional" school. The often unwritten school code calls for silence, obedience, conformity, docility and dependence and often brews trouble with boys and for boys, according to Sexton (1965) and Brewton (1968). The roles of men and women in today's society have changed. Yet schools may still encourage pupils in traditional sex roles. Girls academically perform better than boys in school, with regard to teacher-rated achievement, as noted by Kagen (1969), Good & Brophy (1971) and Fagot (1975). Paradoxically, out-standing life achievements are much rarer in women than in men. The women's grade point average is always higher at the University of Florida. This is generally repeated in almost every American Co-Educational school. Women have earned only about one-third of the B.A.'s and M.A.'s and one-tenth of the PH.D's.

It would seem to the authors of this paper that a practical, common sense recommendation would be to recruit more men into primary and/or upper elementary teaching. Unfortunately, the situation is not that simple. Cultural stigma and salaries of the elementary schools are problem areas. In a very real sense, it's a somewhat brave thing for a man to enter a cultural world that's been female for four generations.

Research has supported the view that young children benefit if men, as well as women, work with them, play with them and generally help and interact with them (Ostrovsky, 1959; Hetherington and Deur, 1972; Seifert, 1974).

The selection of a teaching staff is considered one of the most important factors in establishing a successful school program. To effect a balanced male-female staff is not always feasiable but it is possible to recruit male teacher-aides (paid and volunteers), student teachers or cross-age tutors for the classrooms. Also, schools can utilize resource men of the community such as firemen, policemen and businessmen. (The frequency of the visits, however, must be high to have much value.)

IN-SERVICE TRAINING:

An established teaching staff, whether it is all male, all female, or a combination thereof, can be in-serviced to facilitate meeting the affective and academic needs of both males and females. A week-long pre-service (in summer, before school starts) workshop, a one-day pre-service workshop and/or weekly staff in-service meetings can be conducted. Even training on an individual (one-to-one) basis can be conducted.

Some possible in-service topics can be:

Values Clarification

Child Growth and Development

Learning Modalities

Teaching Modalities

Reality Therapy

Characteristics of both boys and girls
(affective, cognitive, psychomotor)

The content/topics of an in-service depend upon staff needs. In addition, on-going, weekly staff meetings proved more effective, as compared to long sessions or workshops. These weekly staff meetings are effective means to exchange ideas and discuss problems, techniques, materials and activities.

The key to dealing with sexism in the classroom is teacher awareness and attitudes. Teachers in general need to sort out their ideas and re-think many of the things they do. Teachers might contemplate questions, such as the following: Do you expect boys to be more aggressive? Do you expect girls to be more verbal and boys more mathemetical and scientific? Do boys carry books and operate the projector in your class and the girls scrub the desks and dust? If something is too heavy for a girl to carry, perhaps it is too heavy for any child. Thoughtlessness can have many negative consequences.

A values-clarification in-service program, short-course or workshop can be a great assistance in developing this sense of awareness. If a teachers' group recognizes a conflict between the way they actually do feel and the way they are made to think they ought to feel, they are ready to begin to effect a change. Consciousness-raising involves describing one's experiences. It involves bringing certain

values to a conscious level. (An advantage of working in a group is that others can help probe feelings more extensively, and mutual problem areas are recognized.)

It is not an exaggeration to say that "THE" only way to select, to train and to evaluate teacher effectiveness is illusive. However, it is often said that any teacher who chooses to make a difference will make one.

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